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An

Inaugural Essay

On

Acute Hepatitis

By

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of Virginia

John. A. A. A. A.

Chapman & Co.

New York

1850

of 1850

This disease is described by Dr. Cullen,
"Tumor, tension, and pain either pungent or
obtuse in the right hypochondrium, pain at
the clavicle, and top of the right shoulder, the
patient lying with difficulty on the left side;
"dyspnoea, a dry cough, vomiting, and hiccup."

All of these symptoms are rarely
met with in the same case; it is necessary,
however, to mention in the definition of this
disease, symptoms which only occasionally
attend; because its constant symptoms are
not sufficient to distinguish it. On this
account some authors rank jaundice among
the diagnostic symptoms, that its presence
is not sufficiently frequent to assist much
in the diagnosis.

The Liver resembles most other parts of
the body, it is subject to two species of inflam-
mation, the acute and chronic, and it has
been generally supposed, that these varieties
of the disease, consist in fact of a difference
in the absolute seat of the inflammation.

It has been suggested by some Physicians,

1841
The first of the year was a very dry one
and the crops were much injured by the
drought. The wheat was particularly
affected and the yield was very small.
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that the inflammation is of the acute form, when the enveloping membrane of the liver is affected; and of the chronic, when the parenchyma, or substance of the organ itself is too highly excited; while others have conceived, that the inflammation is of the acute form, when the extremities of the hepatic artery are particularly affected; and of the chronic, when the branches of the hepatic vein, or vena porta (which conveys the principal portion of blood to the liver) is the seat of morbid action; it is of very little importance. However, in a practical point of view, which of these opinions is correct.

The acute species, by its active operation, and rapid influence, unless quickly counteracted, soon prostrates the energies of life; the chronic by its slow and insidious progress, gives a check to the enjoyment of health, and gradually undermines the constitution, without immediate alarm, until the evil has proceeded so far as to offend

to baffle recovery. To the former, or acute form of this disease, I shall limit this essay.

Independent of the causes producing other inflammations, such as the application of cold, external injuries from contusions or blows &c. this disease may be occasioned by violent exercise, by intense summer heats, by long continued intermittent, and remittent fevers, by high living, and an intemperance use of vinous and spiritous liquors, but more particularly the latter; (perhaps there is no other of the phlogosia, so frequently excited by the use of spiritous liquors, as Hepatitis; its frequency in India, is ascribed by Bontius, and others, to the same use of arrack.) The various cold conditions of the Liver, are also ranked among the causes of this disease.

In warm climates, this viscus is more apt to be affected, than any other part of the body; probably, as supposed by Dr. Thomas, from the increased secretion of

hile which takes place, when the blood is thrown on the internal parts, by an exposure to cold, or from the bile becoming acid, and thereby exciting an irritation in the part. Dr. Johnson. ascribes it to catarrh hepatic sympathy &c. This disease is more frequent in warm, than in the cold or temperate climates.

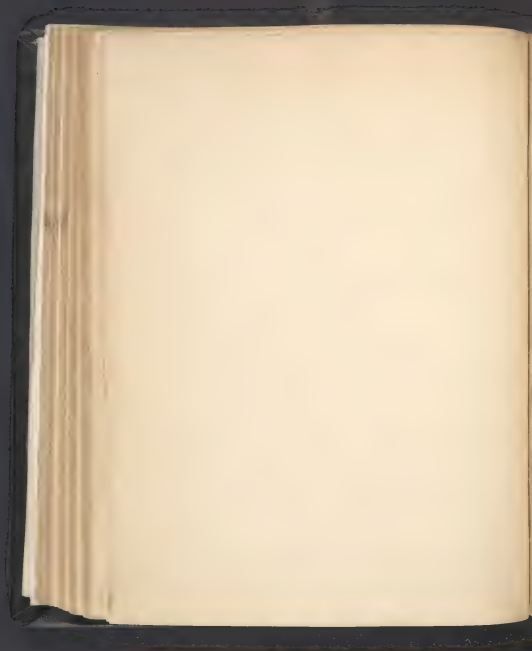
The symptoms of Acute Hepatitis, generally commence with rigors, or shiverings followed by a pungent pain in the right side, which is felt also under the margins of the ribs, shooting more particularly in the direction of the back, and to the shoulder-blade; cough; oppression in the respiration, nausea, sickness, often with a vomiting of apparently bilious matter, accompanied with considerable fever; great watchfulness, and occasional delirium; extreme thirst, the tongue generally covered with a white crust, extending also to the mouth, and fauces; depression of spirits; sometimes hiccup; loss of appetite,

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out of the train was the fresh air. It was
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and difficulty of lying, except on the
opposite side; yet sometimes none and then
occurs, when the patient is unable to lie on
either side; pressure also on the region of
the liver, where there is usually some tension,
induces considerable increase of pain, and
tends also to cough; and the cough is more
generally dry than moist; the bowels
are frequently irregular, though often
slow than otherwise; the urine usually
in small quantity is of a low color
and often mixed with bile and attended
with a scalding sensation; the pulse is
small, and strong, sometimes exceeding one
hundred and twenty strokes in a minute
or at least intermitting; and is
occasionally attended with a peculiar
crawling over the skin, passing readily
into the common crust by action of the
presence of the infection from a skin
boil.

In the disease, as well as in others
it is not always found the appearance of



The same degree of violence, or the, are
then possible. Thus, in some cases the
pain is severe in other scarcely pain-
-able; in some instances the pain is acute
and violent, in other collections of pus
have been found with little or no
pain what with. But in every inflam-
-mation of the liver it may be observed
that the symptoms are more or less acute
according to the degree of sensibility in the
part affected. When the membranous
covering of the surface comes part, or
the ligaments which unite it to the diaphragm.
The influence of pain, fever, and differ-
-ences of humors are much more violent
than when the interior only, substance,
or its concealed interior part is affected.

Both ancient and modern writers
have drawn a distinction between the
symptoms that occur, when the inflammation
occupies the concealed surface of the liver,
and those that are present when the dis-
-ease affects the concave. "It seems





into the stomach. It is calcareous, of the
sandy and, by the coat being im-
-compacted by approximation, and by a
high degree of dyspepsia. It may also
be distinguished from inflammation of the
stomach by more violent, by the ab-
-sence of those gastric irritations, and in-
-sistently which render gastric inflammation
as denoting a complication. The
febrile symptoms, too, in the latter case
strong of that low or typhoid type,
attending gastric inflammation.

From spasm of the biliary ducts, occa-
-sioned by impacted calculi, we may
distinguish this disease by the strong
spasmodic excitement, and many other cir-
-cumstances, especially at the beginning;
but, as Dr Johnson has observed, spasm
will often terminate in, or rather occasion
inflammation, when the treatment must be
the same, as in original hepatitis.

In forming our prognosis of this
disease, we consider it the most favorable

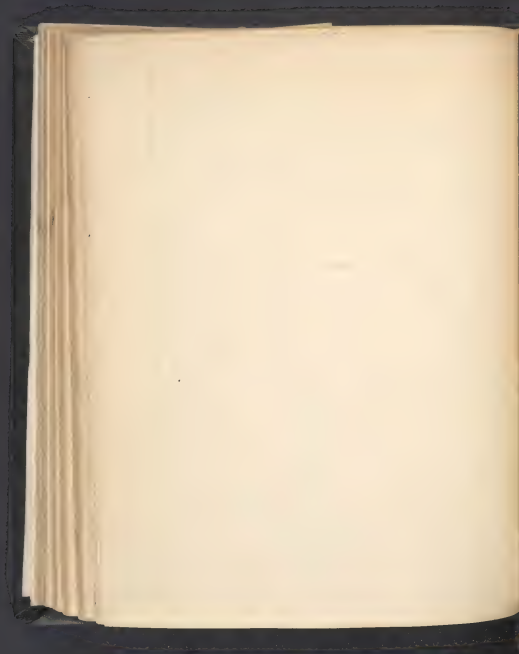


is, a gradual cessation of the pyrexia
symptoms; an increase in the con-
-fusion, the strength not much reduced
by the remedies, return of the apople, and
an increase in the thickness of the body.

Both on the other hand, intensity of
pain in the region of the liver, a full
and frequent pulse, considerable heat,
thick, dry skin, costiveness, and general
rigor denote the most alarming state.

When suppuration has taken place, this
indicates a diminution of pain, we see
in the organs, increase of the evening
sweats, of fever, enlargement of the
conduits, propensity to night sweats,
and other local symptoms. Continued
sweats, cold extremities, and a falling
pulse indicate progress.

Post mortem examinations, often discover
the liver much enlarged, and laid in the hands,
its colour more of a deep purple than
natural, and its membranes more or less
affected by inflammation. ^{They also}



discover adhesions to the neighbouring parts,
also tubercles, Hydatids, and sometimes
large abscesses containing a considerable
quantity of Pus; Pellets of Calculi are
now and then met with. In a few
instances, the liver has been found in
a putrid state resembling a Honeycomb.

In communicating the
Treatment of any disease, several prin-
ciples are above the sword; in many
instances, certain varieties occur, requir-
ing in their application, judgement,
experience, and observation; a precise
method of proceeding cannot therefore
be laid down, adapted to each constitu-
tion, and habit; hence much must
be left to the discretion of every practitioner.

In the treatment of acute Hepatitis
the usual means of abating inflammation,
as is the rigorously pursued, by occasion-
ally adhering to the antiphlogistic regimen.

Spontaneous, and copious bleedings having
been procured, topical depletion should



to merely wound to, that it is to be expected
either, the cupping, or the application of
leeches over the region of the liver, should
the severity of the pain, and the increased
vascular action, continue unabated, venese-
ction should be repeated again very
soon; for no time is to be spared, in
arresting the progress of this violent acute
stage of the disease. By neglecting to
bleed under such circumstances, there will
be danger of suppuration ensuing.

General bleeding in this disease, has
been disapproved by some authors, and
local depletion by cupping, or leeches
recommended in its place; this may be
the correct practice in those cases unat-
tended with much pain, or dysuria, unless
the disease has followed a bad intermittent,
or remittent fever, and the patient conse-
quently left in a cachectic state; but in
those, where the pain is acute, the pulse
full and strong, and the thirst, and
heat considerable, copious, and



repeated venesection at an early period of the disease will be necessary; the blood should be drawn away at once, in a quantity proportioned to the age and temperament of the patient, and urgency of the symptoms; it should also be evacuated "per vias", as physicians have at all times noticed the effect of drawing blood from a congested orifice in inflammatory diseases.

As co-operating to the same end, Cathartics are advantageously used in this disease; to the mercurial, I should give the preference; they should be early, and freely administered, and every available means exerted, to emulge the liver of its bilious secretions.

The exhibition of Cathartics, should not, however supersede the use of copious mild enemata, which are particularly serviceable, both as a fomentation, and a means of removing irritation, and supporting a discharge from the intestines. ^{to} Fomentations have been more frequently employed in this disease, than in most of the phlegmasia,



and often attended with considerable adema-
toma; in very severe cases, the lower limb
has been edematous.

Should the symptoms continue unabated, after
the adoption of these measures, the application
of a large blister should be made over
the region of the liver, and should induce
a disposition to ^{heat} prematurely to the desired intention,
it should be reapplied; and all writers on
the subject, recommend a repetition of blisters,
in preference to supporting a discharge from
the same one, by any stimulating ointment.

To these more active measures, should
be united the liberal use of Refrigerants, such
as solutions of the neutral salts &c., the
free admission of cool air into the apartment
of the patient; and in this, as in the com-
mencement of an acute disease, a forma-
tion or great heat should be rigidly avoided,
and animal food prohibited, and everything
- by far hidden

It also con, uncture. It approaches often pro-
nounceable; and as in other inflammatory

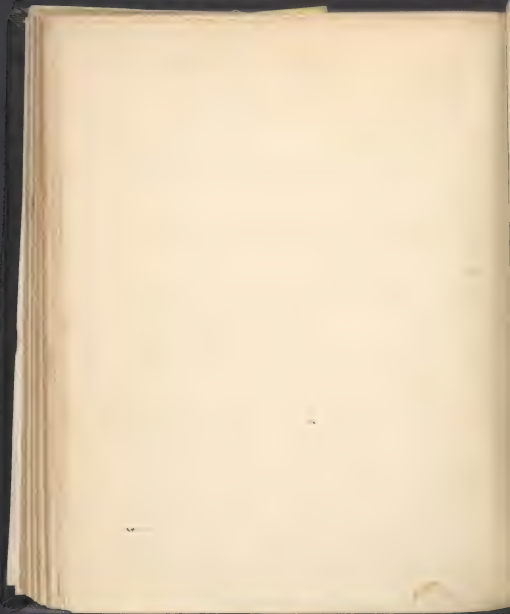


complaints, a diaphanous may be excited,
in increasing doses of Tincture of Iodine, to
which one may sometimes unite with advantage,
the nitrate of Potash. As an auxiliary, the
purgatives, with a free employment of mild
diet, and cooling liquors have been recom-
mended.

This treatment ought to be pursued with such
modifications, as the condition and advancement
of the case require.

Should considerable irritability prevail after the
above employment of the means for cutting
inflammation, advantage may be derived,
from the union of some mild sedative and
anodyne medicine.

recovery will generally be secured, by per-
suing this mode of treatment; making such
alterations in the regimen as are the improvem-
ent of the constitution, and the ability of
the digestive organs, will admit of. Never
forgetting, that the diet should be of the
mildest description, even long after convalescence
has been established, otherwise, considerable



risk of a reproduction of the inflammatory excitement will be incurred; as soon ^{as possible} ~~as soon~~ ^{however} without risking the danger of a relapse, ~~low~~ ^{on} medicines, together with an invigorating diet, and wine, are to be employed; for few complaints leave behind them, more languor, and debility; at the same time, the necessity of strictly avoiding all the exciting causes, should be rigidly enjoined on the patients.

Such is the most approved practice recommended in the cure of Acute Hepatitis; "yet should it, from extraordinary obstinacy, or defective practice - says Professor Chapman, prove refractory to the remedies mentioned, then a thorough mercurial course only can be trusted. All other modes of treatment, on confirmed Hepatitis, are only feeble tamponings, or dangerous tamponings."

Should we with the mercurial impurification be soon induced. we may employ mercury internally, as well as externally; and to make its effects the more certain, we may unite small portions of Opium with it. -

I have thus finished a short essay on
Acute Hepatitis; - and that it must be
deficient in perspicuity of style, and
unadorned with the elegance of language,
I am fully aware; but I believe, as
far as I have been able to obtain infor-
-mation on the subject - it embraces the
true symptoms, pathology, and treatment of
the disease; and this is all I aimed at.

I will therefore conclude, by acknow-
-ledging, how much I feel myself indebted
to the Professors of this University, individually,
for the valuable instruction received from
them, and that they may long enjoy,
the Honor, prosperity, and happiness so justly
due to their univalled exertions, in dissem-
-inating knowledge, so highly beneficial
to mankind, is my Sincere Wish.

